piss clear
wednesday / thursday
30 / 31 august 2006
issue 30
the obligatory DRUG ISSUE
Black Rock City's alternative newspaper
photo by Eric 'ShutterSlut' Stein

Burning Man's snarky reality check

piss clear

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On the cover: Burning Man is, like, totally a trip, maaan. Duuuude ... not as good as the infamous 'Burning Man logo made out of lines of cocaine' Drug Issue cover from 2003, but it'll do. Photo by Eric "ShutterSlut" Stein

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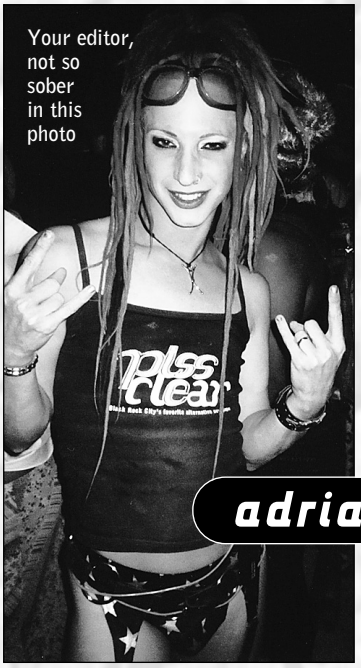
Sober is the new high!

by ADRIAN ROBERTS

adrian's rant

Welcome to what has now become a Burning Man tradition – the obligatory *Piss Clear* Drug Issue. Honestly, I don't know how this happened. We always say no to drugs – but they just won't listen!

Seriously, we have a long history of telling it like it is, and giving you the info you need that the Burning Man organizers won't tell you. And let's face it – this is a town full of drug users! There's a reason why VH1, in their excellent documentary mini-series, *The Drug Years,* had a segment on Burning Man. Sure the Black Rock City Corporation doesn't want to encourage you. But since we know nothing's going to stop you anyway, we want to at least impart some words of wisdom.



Your editor, not so sober in this photo

Go sober one night

Not kidding.

Oh, hells no, I don't mean for the entire week! We are *Piss Clear,* after all. No, for just one day and night, go totally stone-cold sober. It sounds crazy, but trust me. It's as enlightening as any drug you've ever taken – especially at night.

As longtime readers know, I don't normally advocate sobriety at Burning Man. This is an environment that, if not explicitly allows, at least implicitly encourages attendees to get a bit out of their heads ... to take a trip outside of their normal, everyday experiences.

But last year, I ended up with the flu for half my stay here. Believe me, being sick in the desert is no way to spend a vacation. When I was finally well enough to leave the RV, I was understandably a bit gun-shy about ingesting anything that might compromise my immune system – including alcohol. Even though I wasn't completely back up to speed, I was determined to at least experience some of what I'd missed the previous three nights. So at night, I went off to explore the playa. And ... WOW!

See, when you've only ever experienced a Black Rock City evening in some intoxicated state of fucked-upness, being sober actually becomes your new "altered state of consciousness." It literally felt like a different kind of drug, one where everything was crystalline clear, and you could see everything for what it really, truly was!

That meant that what I would have otherwise thought of as a really beautiful art project was actually just pieces of scrap metal and wire held together with duct tape and Christmas lights. Conversely, the really epic stuff that I would just take for granted in that "Wow man, that's cool" kinda of way, I actually saw as insanely intricate and ambitious.

I see drunk people

And oh my gawd, you people! You know, when you're altered yourself, you just don't notice how fucked up everyone else is. Seriously! It's like Black Rock City is one giant nightclub where the drinks are really strong and everyone is on something – not necessarily a bad thing.

The most enlightening thing I discovered about being sober at Burning Man was this: It was still fun. It was still an interesting place to be. It was still ... an experience.

This advice for sobriety comes with a caveat, however:

You know that soul-crushing "decompression" everyone has once they return home? I figured it out. It's called seratonin depletion. And no, I didn't get it last year. Instead, I got right back to work, and everything was just dandy!

But besides missing my usual weeklong hangover, something else was missing. I couldn't put my finger on it, but something just felt ... off. And then I figured it out.

Simply put, I missed out on that glorious, "lose yourself" feeling of getting out of my head – even just once.

Rage early, chill by Saturday

So this year, my advice is: Rage early. Do drugs. Have an out-of-mind experience. And do it before all the weekend warriors and yahoo riff-raff get here. In fact, that's going to be soon, so if you haven't already taken your five hits of blotter acid, or dropped 10 hits of E, that time is NOW.

But starting on Friday night, I recommend you start slowing it down and sobering up. Leave the weekend to the amateurs. You've probably already partied here more than most people do in a year. So let your last night or two be drug-free. Your reentry back into Real Life will be SO much easier, trust me.

Failing that, you could also try the "every other night" plan: Rage hard one night, then take the next one off to give your body a rest. Repeat. Just make sure your last night in BRC is drug-free. I know the temptation will be there to go balls out – "But it's the last night!" I hear you whine. And hey, you don't have to listen to me. I just don't want to be one of your campmates the next day when you're hungover and cracked out from drinking up the rest of your booze and snorting up the rest of your drugs, and now you have to tear down camp and drive all day in Labor Day weekend traffic. Oh, joy.

Seriously, go crazy the night before the night before you leave. I know it sounds wrong – but you'll thank me later.

Come party with us at Bootie BRC!

Until then though, we expect to see you on the playa partying your ass off! And we're here to help! As many of you know, I'm a DJ and club promoter in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Considering this, it's kind of shocking I've never actually DJed or thrown an event here in the party mecca that is Black Rock City!

Well, on **Thursday night,** that's about to change – over at **Fandango (5:00 & Chance)** it's the opening night of **Bootie BRC, Black Rock City's only mashup bootleg party.** This is the Burning Man version of the long-running, one-of-a-kind club I throw with the Mysterious D in both SF and LA – and we're happy to finally be bringing it to the playa!

After the thumping monotony of all the "oonse-oonse" dance music we heard last year, we were determined to help do something about it. So we're bringing our genre-busting brand of bastard pop to BRC – two songs mashed into one, to keep your short-attention-span brains nourished, as well as your asses shaking all night.

Don't know what a "mashup" is? Have you been living under a Black Rock? These hybrid creations contain all your favorite tracks from every genre and era – but made into new songs. Imagine Madonna singing with the Sex Pistols, Missy Elliott rapping with Blondie, Usher singing with the Bee Gees. If you're not familiar with this new style of tuneage, come to Bootie BRC and I'll "gift" you a CD!

I'll see you on the playa!

Enter the Playa Iron Liver Contest!

Piss Clear's 5th annual **Playa Iron Liver Contest** will be held tomorrow, **Thursday, between 3 PM and 6 PM.** Bring your best cocktail and drink recipe to our offices at **6:00 Center Camp at Wheel of Fortune.** The winner will receive a bunch of fabulous prizes, plus their photo and drink recipe in Friday's issue!

Which came first?

by MALDEROR

malderor's rant

I've long thought about suing the Black Rock City Corporation for turning my entire camp into a bunch of raging alcoholics. Coming to the Burn has given us the idea that we can live everyday like we're Keith Moon with some idle time, a Rolls Royce, a couple bottles of brandy, and a swimming pool. Like particularly debauched rock stars, in other words. Seriously, I think my liver would like a few words with Larry Harvey about what all this "freedom" has done to my health. Burning Man has instilled in me the certainty that Nikki Sixx is some kind of chicken-shit panty-waist, and that I should live life back in the Real World like it's one constant, seven-day-a-week party. This world-view might be slightly at odds with having a gainful career. On one hand, I think Burners are more fun than your average wage-slave. On the other, I wonder if we're all headed for a future full of unemployment, dialysis, and/or sharing our bunk in rehab with Mel Gibson.

A decade-and-a-half of joyful self-abuse has resulted from coming out to this accursed desert, and it doesn't stop once you get home, does it? I describe the 'decompression' period as one long skidmark as we try to put the brakes on and not start every day with a pile of Class-A chemicals and a shot of Early Times. I'm usually well into fall before I stop seeing tracers as a day-to-day thing. And then suddenly it's Halloween, then the holidays, then New Years, and Jesus, does this ride ever stop?(Wait, was that a cry for help? Okay, let's move on...)

Longtime readers will recall this column tends to blather on about the notion of bringing-Burning-Man-back-home-with-you, all year-round. "Playa names," for instance, are retarded. They enforce the notion that you're somebody different here on the playa than you are back in the Real World. That's total bullshit, or at least it should be. The person you are on the playa should be the same person you are around the water cooler. There should be no division in your playa-persona and the persona you present to HR when you put in your request to get these days off. You can be this person all of the time.

I've been coming out here longer than most of my immediate neighbors have been alive. (Seriously. They stuck us near Kidsville this year. I wonder if my past griping about placement issues has led to my camp getting, um, "reduced quality" placement this year? Surely the Burning Man organizers wouldn't be that vindictive, right? Right?) When I started coming here I was an impoverished college student, wondering what to do with my life. But since tickets were only $25 at the gate, my poverty wasn't a serious barrier to admission. I came and had some truly mind-blowing experiences. I saw "creativity" not as a theoretical abstract, but as a valid pursuit. I learned that artists weren't just dead guys in museums. You could spend your time creating artwork, and it could be *worthwhile* – even if you weren't ever going to become a millionaire. In fact, the disposable nature of all this flammable art pretty much guaranteed that the artists would never even be remembered, much less enriched.

Hot girls doing cool shit

Money didn't matter. People would spend hours, days, even months working on something astonishing – not unlike this year's Flaming Lotus Girl *Serpent Mother* project – and they'd do all the work as volunteers. Totally without pay. Totally because welding and grinding and bending sheet metal (surrounded by hot girls) is a lot of fun. People worked on this stuff because they loved doing it – not because they were seeing a fat paycheck at the end of their day.

That was Back In The Day,™ but in many respects, things haven't changed. People still donate amazing amounts time, money, and energy to projects, and some of us have lucked out by managing to scrape together the bare bones of a 'career' in some creative field because of it. I look around at my campmates and right now I see writers, welders, graphic designers, DJs, videographers, club promoters, a comedian, and about seventeen musicians.

And all of it makes me wonder: does coming to Burning Man lead one to pursue a creative career back in the Real World? Or does being the sort of person who seeks a creative career also make you the sort of person who journeys out here to this god-forsaken desert? Are you an artist back home, or are you only a creative participant while you're out here on the playa? Which came first, the Playa Chicken, or the Serpent-Mother's Egg?

HAS YOUR ART CAR:

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3. Caught reckless driving?
4. Not been decorated enough?
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Slow down! *by SIR LOIN*

sir loin's rant

To all you baby-boomer Burners out here – slow the fuck down or you'll be dead by 50.

Admit it: you can't keep up with the next generation, so why even try? You're only hurting yourself, because everyone around you already knows your tragic fate. Your time to party was back in the '80s. But some of you people just can't put it down. Can't you see that twenty or thirty years of coke, alcohol, and E (the kids don't call it X anymore, old-timer) are taking its toll?

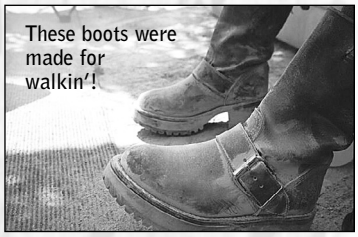
You're a coat hanger being bent back and forth. It's getting warmer and you're about to break. What do you think's going to happen, Einstein? Stop now, you fucking idiot, 'cause I don't want to watch you die.

An overdose might be tragically hip for a rock star, but a damaged mitral valve after four days of 'shrooming on the playa is not the badge of courage you need. That killer hangover may be more than just a cliché. The difference between a hangover and a hospital might be those Jager-bombs you did last night. You cross the line far too often as it is, and out here you run the risk of death or serious injury – not by getting hit by an art car, but by doing lines all night in Art's car.

Throwing up is a marker that you've done too much, not an invitation to have some hair of the dog. Sure, there are EMTs here – but what if there's a run on baby-boomer burn-out and the only defibrillator is being used a mile away?

If you really have a death wish, why not take your eight-ball and go do some backpacking. Go bag a 14K summit with a 40 lb. pack in 90 degree heat, all the while gulping tequila and snorting lines as long as your arm. That way, I don't have to watch you stroke out. Sound ridiculous? You're ridiculous! Find a new hobby or you'll be dead by 50.

Go take a hike!



These boots were made for walkin'!

Sir Booga

Oh, the playa is bike-friendly. Oh, the playa is so big you need a bike to explore it. Oh, look at my Burner bike! Isn't it so cool? Blah, blah, blah...

People, shut the fuck up and go take a walk! You'd be amazed at the assortment of things you can see if you simply chuck the bike and walk instead. There are some among us, with short attention spans or a need for instant gratification, that can't seem to get off their fucking bikes for one minute.

Here are some suggestions to those who've never walked the playa. Get some shoes on – not flip-flops, Tevas, or any open-toed shoe. We're talking shoe-shoes and socks. Otherwise, the playa version of Montezuma's revenge will fuck your feet so bad, the cracks will be deeper than the bed sores on Stephen Hawking's ass.

Bring a backpack with some cool shit to give away. Showing up anywhere empty-handed is no way to meet people. Sometimes a little planning can pay dividends. A cold six-pack can sometimes gain you access to an art car. And nobody's going to flag down a couple of bikers unless maybe you've got nice tits.

What it boils down to is this: would you rather spend a lot of time in a few places, or a little time in a lot of places?

If your pendulum swings towards the latter, move on and buh-bye and oh yeah, nice bike. If you're like me and you want to create everlasting memories, leave your bike at camp and go take a walk. That way, you have something to think about later in life, when you're too old and feeble to even move.

haiku *by ADRIAN ROBERTS*

Came to the playa
Here we are,
entertain us!
Specticipating!

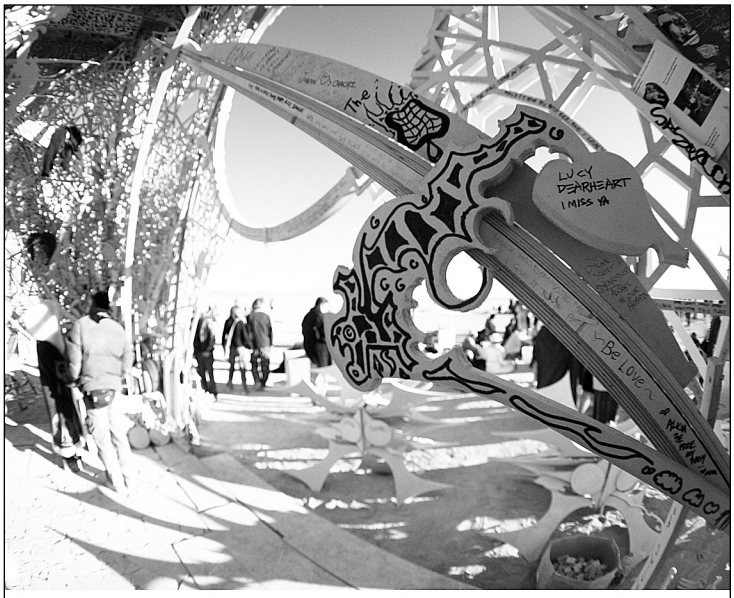
Bootie BRC
Mashups are
fun to dance to
Better than techno

DPW
Rocks! *Piss Clear*
loves them so much
Why was there a feud?

High ticket prices
Keep out the
starving artists
Kinda ironic

The base of the Man
A waste of ticket money
I miss the hay bales

Volunteer for a
For-profit corporation?
What are you, crazy?



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